

Redistricting/Consolidation Advisory Committee

12/06/07 Minutes

Dr. Horoschak opened the meeting thanking the committee members who agreed to be a part of this process and welcomed the public in attendance. Addressing the public, he told them he wanted this to be a very transparent process; however, this is not a time for the observers to interject into the meeting or ask questions of the committee. Any information the audience would like to submit in writing would be made available to members of the committee. He noted this is a difficult subject and that it needs to be addressed within the context of present and future financial concerns, but always taking into account what is in the best interest of the students.

As advisors, the members will review data, make recommendations and prioritize options so he can move forward and make budgetary recommendations to the school committee.

Upon review of the 11/27/07 minutes a motion to approve the minutes was made by Linda Sheehan and seconded by Mr. Bushell. All present approved.

Director of Elementary Education, Mr. Robert Bushell presented a hand out which included elementary school enrollment, enrollment history and a three-year and five-year average cohort projection. Mr. Bushell used the Cedar Hill school packet as an example when he discussed enrollment count, building capacity and formulas to

determine class size. By contract, Mr. Bushell stated, the pupil teacher ratio cannot go above 25.5. When looking for classroom space he must use the weighted total for that grade, often requiring split grades in a class. Responding to a question and concern of correct enrollment count, Dr. D'Agostino said October 1st enrollment figures were used because this date is the state's deadline for testing and any other type of reporting.

Responding to a question regarding the condition of schools and are they up to code, Dr. Horoschak said David Small, Director of Buildings and Maintenance will put together data on building conditions and expense of renovating buildings. Mr. Small will be asked to present this information at the next meeting.

Dr. D'Agostino handed out a folder with a memorandum regarding special education classroom locations and student capacities. He explained that the committee must be aware of new programs, aware of the extension of existing programs and the impact these programs will have on the school district. His handouts included a description of each new program he plans on developing for next year.

Dr. D'Agostino also provided a breakdown of every elementary school and the type of resources at each school. He included the 6th graders because of the possibility of that group being moved to junior high schools. He made available a list of the services provided to the junior high schools, including the numbers from all the feeder

schools.

A committee member expressed concern that special area teachers have a facility to work at, rather than a hallway or corridor. Also a concern about the P-K and toilet facilities, as that would create a supervision problem.

Dr. Mercurio distributed documents indicating what the available middle school space looks like. He pointed out that in terms of room size, given stanines and weighting, and for master scheduling purposes, you need to consider 25 students as a starting point to balance classes contractually at 28 weighted. “Full Rooms” can hold 25 students. “Tech Ed” rooms are by contractual obligation and only a certain number of students can be within those classrooms. “Lab Rooms” are science and/or computer labs. Moving a grade six to the junior high level would require an additional six more classroom spaces.

Responding to a question for exact capacity at the junior high level, Dr. Mercurio said he would provide that information at the next meeting.

A committee member asked about maps showing school locations and the streets from the feeder schools. Steve O’Haire, Transportation Director, was asked the possibility of getting maps with this information. He could not confirm attaining such maps.

Consolidation options were discussed.

- The pros and cons of creating a “true” middle school. Dr. Horoschak’s expectation of the committee is the determination of sufficient space to add the sixth grade to middle school and, if so, what kind of configuration and what the cost savings might be.**
- The cost effectiveness to bring in modern portable units for a limited period of time. Can portable units handle activities that don’t need full space of classroom? What it might look like. Can the 6th grade be phased into the middle school building? What would the financial savings be?**
- Bring special education students back into the system.**
- Could all 6th graders be placed in one facility and then split up to go to their respective 7th and 8th grade schools. What would it potentially cost and what would be the potential savings?**

Dr. Horoschak asked the committee to closely review criteria that should be used in analyzing consolidation/redistricting options. Set criteria to be agreed upon and evaluate options for redistricting/consolidation of schools.

The committee unanimously decided to break up into three teams.

The teams will consider:

- **Potential for school consolidation while continuing a K-6 system**
- **Potential for school consolidation if 6th grade were removed from K-5**
- **How to organize 6th graders into teams. Team configuration between 95 and 120 students.**
- **Are the stanine levels of the students (6th graders) to be considered?**

Teams will report their findings at the next Advisory Committee Meeting.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 10th 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Location to be determined